

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 452 617

EC 308 374

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TITLE Experiences of Students with Disabilities in Selected  
Community and Technical Colleges. The Individual  
Accommodations Model: Accommodating Students with  
Disabilities in Post-Secondary Settings.  
INSTITUTION Kansas Univ., Lawrence. Center for Research on Learning.  
SPONS AGENCY Special Education Programs (ED/OSERS), Washington, DC.  
PUB DATE 2001-02-00  
NOTE 24p.  
CONTRACT H324M980109-00  
AVAILABLE FROM University of Kansas, Center for Research on Learning, 1122  
West Campus Rd., JR Pearson Hall, Room 517, Lawrence, KS  
66045; Tel: 785-864-7081; Fax: 785-864-5728; Web site:  
<http://das.kucrl.org/iam/reports.html>.  
PUB TYPE Numerical/Quantitative Data (110) -- Reports - Research  
(143)  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS \*Academic Accommodations (Disabilities); \*College Students;  
Community Colleges; \*Disabilities; Higher Education;  
Learning Disabilities; \*Student Attitudes; \*Student  
Personnel Services; \*Student Problems; Tutors  
IDENTIFIERS \*Testing Accommodations (Disabilities)

## ABSTRACT

Student questionnaires were administered to 61 students with disabilities currently enrolled in community colleges in Kansas (n=20), Minnesota (n=23), and California (n=18). This information was collected through two campus visits during the fall of 1999. Students reported an average of 1.3 disabilities per person, ranging from 1-6. The most frequently reported disability type was learning disabilities (LD), affecting approximately half of the students. Given this high proportion of LD, additional analyses were conducted to compare the students with LD with students with other disabilities. Results from the questionnaires indicate the students' greatest difficulties were with concentration, distraction, frustration, test anxiety, remembering, and mathematics. The most frequent accommodations and services mentioned were notetakers, extended testing time, or quiet testing rooms, and tutors. The tutors were available for all of the students through the college's learning center or library. There were no tutors specifically designated for students with disabilities. Students rated several issues in selecting and using accommodations as very important, such as the amount of training required, task appropriateness, personal cost, availability, independence, and disability specificity. Overall, students appeared satisfied with the accommodations they were receiving. Data tables are included that illustrate questionnaire results. (CR)

# *Experiences of Students with Disabilities in Selected Community and Technical Colleges*

February 2001

## **The Individual Accommodations Model: Accommodating Students with Disabilities in Post-Secondary Settings**



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The University of Kansas  
Center for Research on Learning  
Division of Adult Studies

Funded by  
The U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Special Education Programs



# Experiences of Students with Disabilities in Selected Community and Technical Colleges

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Center for Research on Learning  
Division of Adult Studies

February, 2001

## Acknowledgements

This project "The Personal Accommodations Model: Accommodating Students with Disabilities in Postsecondary Settings" is 100% funded by the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs from October 1, 1998 to September 30, 2002 at \$150,000 each year (award number H324M980109-00). Serving as consultants on the project are Roger Smith and Dave Edyburn from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Winnie Dunn and Mary Pat Gilbert from the University of Kansas Medical Center. The project's principal investigator is Daryl Mellard, and staff include Sean Lancaster, Melissa Krueger, Lesa Hoffman, and Noelle Kurth. Inquires should be directed to: Gwen Berry, Project Coordinator, Division of Adult Studies, 517 JR Pearson Hall, 1122 West Campus Road, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045, (785) 864-7079 or to the project website at [das.kucrl.org/iam](http://das.kucrl.org/iam).

# Experiences of Students with Disabilities in Selected Community and Technical Colleges

Student questionnaires were administered to 61 students with disabilities currently enrolled in community colleges in Kansas (n=20), Minnesota (n=23), and California (n=18). This information was collected through the course of 2 campus visits during the spring and fall of 1999. Unless otherwise noted, all summaries are of students completing the questionnaire for the first time. The students were nominated by college staff and paid an incentive for their participation.

The data in Table 1 indicates the students varied in age (mean age=30.45), with only one-third of the "typical" college age of 18-21. The sample was predominantly white, non-parents, with both genders represented equally. The data in Table 2 indicates that one-third were employed (of those, mostly part-time), and about one-third were financially independent. According to Table 3, about half of the sample was enrolled in 9 to 13 credit hours, with one quarter enrolled in less than 9 and the final quarter enrolled in more than 13. The majority stated an AA or AS degree as their current goal, with plans to transfer to a four-year college.

Students reported an average of 1.3 disabilities per person, ranging from 1-6 (Table 5). The most frequently reported disability type was learning disabilities (n = 29), affecting approximately half of the students (Table 4). Given this high proportion of LD, additional analyses (Tables 12 and 13) were conducted to compare the students with LD with students with other disabilities. Orthopedic or mobility-related disabilities affected about one-third. The students' greatest difficulties were with concentration, distraction, frustration, test anxiety, remembering, and mathematics (Tables 5 and 6). The most frequent accommodations and services mentioned were notetakers, extended testing time or quiet testing rooms, and tutors (Tables 7 and 8). The tutors were available for all of the students such as through the college's learning center or library. They were not tutors specifically designated for students with disabilities. Students rated several issues in selecting and using accommodations as "very" important, such as the amount of training required, task appropriateness, personal cost, availability, ease of use, independence, and disability specificity (Table 9). Overall, students appeared satisfied with the accommodations they were receiving (Table 10), although the extent of their satisfaction was somewhat related to the type of disability they experienced. In general, a small, mostly nonsignificant (underpowered) trend was observed for students with physical disabilities to report greater satisfaction than students with non-physical disabilities.

Additionally, 19 students completed the instrument twice, and these students were compared across several of the items. Nine of these students were employed at Time 1 (Spring 1999), and two more were employed at Time 2 (Fall 1999). The number of credit hours taken by the students stayed constant for 4, increased for 2, and

decreased for 11. Twelve of the students reported the same education goal at both times (AA/AS degree for 11, completion of general education requirements for 1), while 4 (20%) reported a different goal. The reported number of disabilities remained constant for 15 of the students, and decreased for 4. The reported number of academically related difficulties stayed constant for 4 students, increased for 6, and decreased for 8. Finally, the reported number of accommodations currently used was constant for 8 students, increased for 5, and decreased for 4.

The high frequency of student participants with learning disabilities allowed for more detailed analyses of this group of students. Our analyses included comparing the students with learning disabilities ( $n = 29$ ) with the students with other types of disabilities. These analyses are summarized in Table 12. While statistical tests did not reveal statistically significant results ( $p$ -values  $> .05$ ), the trends suggested that students with LD were younger and had corresponding less college experience (e.g., fewer credits and fewer hours enrolled). They were also likely to work fewer hours per week in a job and were less likely to have children. They were also likely to report more disabilities.

In Table 13 the percentages of each group are reported who responded "yes" to a variety of questions. The calculated chi-square and associated  $p$ -value is also tabled. The data show differences between these groups on several variables, even those variables for which the calculated  $p$ -value was not statistically significant. Congruent with the finding that students with LD are less likely to have children is the finding that they are less likely to be married. They were also less likely to be involved in clubs or organizations outside of the college setting (25% vs. 53%), which may have implications for their feelings of connection to the community and social support. They may also be less involved because of higher rates of employment or their sense of need to focus on their academic pursuits because of their higher percentage of attention (89% vs. 60%) and cognitive difficulties (96% vs. 73%).

One difference, however, was that the students with LD reported that they were employed (46%) at a higher rate than the other students with disabilities (28%). An interesting contrast is that they worked fewer hours per week in those jobs. Since their employment rates were higher, they were also less likely to receive benefits from social security, either supplemental security income (3% vs. 53%) or social security disability income (20% vs. 37%). Their access was also less limiting than for students with other disabilities (13% vs. 60%).

In summary our limited data on these students did provide some statistically significant differences between students with LD and those students with other disabilities. A very important comparison not available in this data set is how these students compare to the general student population and to students with disabilities who had not self-identified themselves as students with disabilities to the college's office for student services. Such comparative information seems very important to targeting the resources for improving the recruitment, retention, and completion.

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Table 1

Age, Gender, Ethnicity, & Parental Status

<u>Age</u> (mean=30.45; sd = 11.32)	<u>Count</u>	<u>Valid %</u>	<u>Cumulative %</u>
18-21	20	33.3	33.3
22-25	10	16.7	50.0
30-35	11	18.3	68.3
36-44	8	13.3	81.7
45-52	11	18.3	100.0
Missing	1		

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Valid %</u>
Male	30	49.2
Female	31	50.8

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Valid %</u>
White	45	75.0
Black	6	10.0
Asian	3	5.0
Hispanic	3	5.0
White & Hispanic	2	3.3
Amer. Ind., Black, & White	1	1.7
Missing	1	

(table continues)

<u>Parental Status</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Valid %</u>	<u>Cumulative %</u>
None	43	72.9	72.9
1 child	4	6.8	79.9
2 children	8	13.6	93.2
3 children	1	1.7	94.9
4 children	2	3.4	98.3
6 children	1	1.7	100.0
Missing	2		

Table 2

Financial and Employment Background

<u>Financial Status</u>	<u>Yes</u>		<u>No</u>		<u>Missing</u>
	<u>Count</u>	<u>Valid%</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Valid%</u>	<u>Count</u>
Financially Independent	22	37.9	36	62.1	3
Vocational Rehabilitation	25	43.1	33	56.9	3
Client					
Has Social Security Disability	18	29.5	43	70.5	0
Has Social Security	18	29.5	43	70.5	0
Has Lost Benefits	7	11.7	53	88.3	1
Has Financial Aid for College	32	54.2	27	45.8	2

(table continues)



	<u>Yes</u>		<u>No</u>		<u>Missing</u>
	<u>Count</u>	<u>Valid%</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Valid%</u>	<u>Count</u>
<u>Currently Employed</u>	22	36.7	38	63.3	1
Part-Time	19	90.5			
Full-Time	2	9.5			

Table 3

Enrollment Status and Educational Goals

<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Valid %</u>	<u>Cumulative%</u>
3 to 8 hours	17	27.9	27.9
9 to 13 hours	29	47.5	75.4
14 to 19 hours	15	24.6	100.0

<u>Current Goal</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Valid %</u>
AS/ AS degree	37	64.9
Vocational Certificate	5	8.8
College Experience	4	7.0
Finish General Requirements	9	15.8
Don't Know	1	1.8
Become a Self-Advocate	1	1.8
Missing	4	

(table continues)

<b><u>Educational Plans</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Valid %</u></b>
Other 2-year College	3	5.7
4-year University	37	69.8
Independent/Specialized Training	6	11.3
Don't Know	7	13.2
Missing	8	

<b><u>Future Work Plans</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Valid %</u></b>
Professional	22	75.9
Clerical	2	6.9
Don't Know	5	17.2
Missing	32	

---

Table 4

Documented Disabilities

<u>Disability</u>	<u>Response Count</u>	<u>% Responses</u>	<u>% Cases</u>
Visually Impaired/Blind	6	6.5	10.2
Hard of Hearing/Deaf	8	8.7	13.6
Orthopedic/Mobility	17	18.5	28.8
Speech/Language	4	4.3	6.8
Learning Disability	29	31.5	49.2
Emotional/Behavioral	7	7.6	11.9
Head Injuries	9	9.8	15.3
Chronic Illness	5	5.4	8.5
Chronic Pain	2	2.2	3.4
Mental Health	1	1.1	1.7
Epilepsy	1	1.1	1.7
Multiple Sclerosis	2	2.2	3.4
ADD	1	1.1	1.7
<b>Totals</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 5

Number of Disabilities Reported

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<u>Number of Disabilities</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Valid %</u>	<u>Cumulative %</u>
1	41	69.5	69.5
2	10	16.9	86.4
3	3	5.1	91.5
4	4	6.8	98.3
5	0	0	98.3
6	1	1.7	100.0
Missing	2		

---

Table 6

Reported\* Attentional, Emotional, & Verbal Difficulties

	<u>Response Count</u>	<u>% Responses</u>	<u>% Cases</u>
<b><u>Attentional Difficulties</u></b> (43/59)			72.9
Completing Assignments	3	0.6	5.1
Concentration	27	5.8	45.8
Daydreaming	16	3.4	27.1
Distraction	24	5.2	40.7
Following Directions	19	4.1	32.2
Organization/Time	4	0.9	6.8
<b>Management</b>			
Paying Attention	22	4.7	37.3
Sitting Still or in One Place	17	3.7	28.8
Staying on Track	16	3.4	27.1
Study Habits	21	4.5	35.6
Working Independently	4	0.9	6.8
<b>Totals</b>	173	37.3	26.7

(table continues)

	<u>Response Count</u>	<u>% Responses</u>	<u>% Cases</u>
<b><u>Emotional Difficulties</u> (43/59)</b>			<b>72.9</b>
Adapting to Change	6	1.3	10.2
Frustration	29	6.3	49.2
Getting Along with Others	4	0.9	6.8
Test Anxiety	30	6.5	50.8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>14.9</b>	<b>29.3</b>
 <b><u>Verbal Difficulties</u> (21/59)</b>			<b>35.6</b>
Asking Questions	2	0.4	3.4
Self-Expression	13	2.8	22.0
Speaking to a Crowd	12	2.6	20.3
Talking with Teacher & Others	6	1.3	10.2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>14.0</b>

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\* Total number of responses = 464; Total number of respondents = 59

Table 7

Reported\* Accessibility & Cognitive Difficulties

	<u>Response Count</u>	<u>% Responses</u>	<u>% Cases</u>
<b><u>Accessibility Difficulties</u> (22/59)</b>			<b>37.3</b>
Hearing the Teacher	9	1.9	15.3
Classroom Access	12	2.6	20.3
Seeing in Classroom	10	2.2	16.9
<b>Totals</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>17.5</b>
<b><u>Cognitive Difficulties</u> (50/59)</b>			<b>84.7</b>
Letter/Number Reversals	7	1.5	11.9
Mathematics	25	5.4	42.4
Memory Retrieval	24	5.2	40.7
New Vocabulary	14	3	23.7
Reading	21	4.5	35.6
Remembering	28	6.0	47.5
Spelling	22	4.7	37.3
Writing Papers	17	3.7	28.8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>34.1</b>	<b>33.5</b>

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\* Total number of responses = 464; Total number of respondents = 59

Table 8

Reported\* Testing Accommodations, Service, & Equipment Use

	<u>Count</u>	<u>% Responses</u>	<u>% Cases</u>
<u>Testing</u>			
Alternative Testing Formats	3	1.8	5.5
Earplugs	1	0.6	1.8
Extended Testing Time	26	15.4	47.3
Quiet Testing Room	18	10.7	32.7
<b>Totals</b>	48	28.4	21.8

(table continues)



	<u>Count</u>	<u>% Responses</u>	<u>% Cases</u>
<b><u>Services &amp; Personnel</u></b>			
Additional Outside Help	6	3.6	10.9
Copy Instructor's Notes	1	0.6	1.8
Counseling w/ MH Counselor	1	0.6	1.8
Early Registration	1	0.6	1.8
Excell Program	2	1.2	3.6
Interpreters	4	2.4	7.3
Learning Center	2	1.2	3.6
Notetaker	28	16.6	50.9
Reader	2	1.2	3.6
Shorter Class Time	1	0.6	1.8
Study Skills Course	2	1.2	3.6
Tutors	13	7.7	23.6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>37.2</b>	<b>9.4</b>
<b><u>Equipment</u></b>			
Adaptive Technology	5	3.0	9.1
Calculator	1	0.6	1.8
Special Equipment	2	1.2	3.6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>4.8</b>

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\* Total number reported = 169

Table 9

Reported\* Auditory, Visual, Transportation, & Access Accommodation Use

	<u>Count</u>	<u>% Responses</u>	<u>% Cases</u>
<b><u>Auditory Assistance</u></b>			
Captioning Device	3	1.8	5.5
Overhead for Public Speaking	1	0.6	1.8
Sign Language Signs	2	1.2	3.6
Sitting in Front of Classroom	5	3	9.1
Tape Recorder	7	4.1	12.7
Taped Notes/Texts	4	2.4	7.3
Textbooks on Tape	4	2.4	7.3
TTY	1	0.6	1.8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>6.1</b>
<b><u>Visual Assistance</u></b>			
Brailled Texts	1	0.6	1.8
Computer Screen Magnifier	1	0.6	1.8
Enlarged Materials	2	1.2	3.6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>2.4</b>

(table continues)

	<u>Count</u>	<u>% Responses</u>	<u>% Cases</u>
<b><u>Transportation &amp; Access</u></b>			
Automatic Doors	3	1.8	5.5
Handicapped Parking	2	1.2	3.6
Lift for Vans	1	0.6	1.8
Public Transportation	3	1.8	5.5
Raised Desk	7	4.1	12.7
Stair Lift	1	0.6	1.8
Table to Replace Desk	2	1.2	3.6
<b>Totals</b>	19	11.2	4.9

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\* Total number reported = 169

Table 10

Frequency (%) for Accommodation Issues Importance Ratings

<u>Selection Issues</u>	<b>Importance Ratings</b>				
	<u>none</u>	<u>little</u>	<u>moderate</u>	<u>important</u>	<u>very</u>
Training Required	7 (11.5)	2 (3.3)	12 (19.7)	13 (21.3)	22 (36.1)
Task Appropriateness	2 (3.3)	2 (3.3)	7 (11.5)	18 (29.5)	27 (44.3)
Personal Cost	4 (6.6)	3 (4.9)	9 (14.8)	14 (23.0)	26 (46.4)
Cost to School	15 (24.6)	6 (9.8)	13 (21.3)	9 (14.8)	15 (24.6)
Availability	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	3 (19.7)	12 (19.7)	40 (65.6)
Ease of Use	2 (3.3)	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	22 (36.1)	31(50.8)
Effectiveness			1 (1.6)	13 (21.3)	42 (68.9)
Independence	1 (1.6)	3 (4.9)	3 (4.9)	11 (18.0)	37 (60.7)
Used by Other Students	14 (23.0)	7 (11.5)	13 (21.3)	13 (21.3)	8 (13.1)
Own Previous Use	9 (14.8)	3 (4.9)	12 (19.7)	16 (26.2)	16 (16.2)
Social Acceptance	6 (9.8)	8 (13.1)	6 (9.8)	14 (23.0)	23 (37.7)
Specific Disability	1 (1.6)	3 (4.9)	10 (16.4)	9 (14.8)	33 (54.1)
Portability	4 (6.6)	3 (4.9)	12 (19.7)	11 (18.0)	26 (42.6)

Table 11

Frequency (%) Accommodation Selection Issues Opinions

I am satisfied .....	<u>N/A</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Agree</u>
...with the manner in which my disability is discussed with me.	4 (6.6)	2 (3.3)	2 (3.3)	7 (11.5)	24 (39.3)	22 (36.1)
....that my disability related information is kept confidential.	5 (8.2)	1 (1.6)	2 (3.3)	5 (8.2)	19 (31.1)	28 (45.9)
...with the process used in selecting my accommodation.	6 (9.8)	1 (1.6)	3 (4.9)	5 (8.2)	25 (41.0)	20 (32.8)
...with the training I received.	15 (24.6)		1 (1.6)	9 (14.8)	19 (31.1)	15 (24.6)

(table continues)

I am satisfied .....	<u>N/A</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>
...with the effectiveness of my accommodation.	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	5 (8.2)	6 (9.8)	25 (41.0)	22 (36.1)
...with the accommodation provided for me.	1 (1.6)		6 (9.8)	4 (6.6)	27 (44.3)	22 (36.1)

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Table 12

Comparisons of Students With and Without Learning Disabilities

Variable	<u>Non-LD (n = 32)</u>		<u>LD (n = 29)</u>		<u>F-</u> <u>value</u>	<u>p-</u> <u>value</u>
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Age	32.26	11.82	28.52	10.63	1.65	.20
Years in college	2.23	1.67	1.71	1.44	1.58	.21
Credits enrolled	10.22	3.41	11.21	4.07	1.06	.31
Credits earned	36.72	26.83	33.36	35.66	.138	.71
Number of children	.83	1.53	.41	.82	1.69	.19
Hours worked per week	17.44	11.06	15.69	8.16	.17	.69
Number of disabilities	1.37	.67	1.76	1.33	2.07	.16

Table 13

Comparisons of Students With and Without Learning Disabilities Reporting "Yes"

	<u>Non-LD</u>	<u>LD</u>	X <sup>2</sup>	<u>p-value</u>
Are you a parent?	34.4	24.1	.77	.38
Currently employed	28.1	46.4	2.15	.14
Supplemental Security Income?	53.1	3.4	18.05	.000
Social Security Disability Income	37.5	20.7	2.07	.15
Involvement in clubs outside of college?	53.1	25.9	4.49	.034
Attention difficulty?	60.0	89.7	5.12	.024
Emotional Difficulty?	56.7	10.3	8.12	.004
Accessibility Difficulty?	60.0	13.8	13.46	.000
Cognitive Difficulty?	73.3	96.6	6.15	.013





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